

site on December 24, 2011, and saw a bird in the thicket of *Acacia senegal* and *Prosopis juliflora*. It was observed for about 8 minutes before it flew into the adjoining Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. The next day, we sighted three birds, which again flew into the Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Two birds were seen on December 27 near a waterhole in the Gorella Beat of the Sanctuary by a forest guard (Sada Shiv Tiwari). We have visited the Kaler forest and Sajjangarh Sanctuary occasionally since 1986, but had never seen this species till these sightings. Since the last two years, some

farmers of Gorella village, at the southern border of the Sanctuary, have started growing sugarcane. The cultivation of sugarcane could have attracted the birds to the area.

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### 11. SIGHTING OF ALBINO COMMON SAND BOA *GONGYLOPHIS CONICUS* FROM NORTHERN WESTERN GHATS, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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During a faunistic survey of the Northern Western Ghats in Maharashtra, the first author sighted an albino Common Sand Boa *Gongylophis conicus* (Schneider, 1801) at Laling Ghat Forest (20° 47' 36" N; 74° 44' 14" E; 380 m above msl) in Dhule district on October 07, 2011. The boa was pale pinkish to whitish with obscure faint patches on its body. It had red eyes and a reddish tongue. The snake was resting under dense vegetation on moist sandy soil near the bank of a reservoir below the Laling Waterfall. The sand boa had a total body length of about 70 cm. It was photographed (Fig. 1) and released where it was found. It was sighted again in December 2011, in the same locality and habitat. The sighting of a full grown albino is significant as most albinos are easily noticed and fall prey to predators.

There are very few reports on albinism in reptiles in general and snakes in particular from India (D'Abreu 1918, Lahiri 1955, Kumar 1988). There are also no published reports of total albinism both in the family Boidae, and in the Common Sand Boa. Whitaker (1971) has recorded a specimen



Fig. 1: The albino Common Sand Boa was released after being photographed

of Russell's Sand Boa *Eryx conicus* (now *Gongylophis conicus*) collected near Madras (now Chennai), which was uniform pale cream in colour, the underside being slightly lighter and the eyes were black, which could be a case of partial albinism. Our sighting is perhaps the first record of total albinism in this species and for Boidae from India.

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## 12. REPORT OF AN ALBINO BEAKED WORM-SNAKE *GYPTOTYPHLOPS ACUTUS* (DUMÉRIL AND BIBRON, 1844)

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The Beaked Worm-snake *Gryptotyphlops acutus* is a non-venomous snake of the family Typhlopidae. It is endemic to India and distributed almost all over the Indian peninsula south of the Indo-Gangetic plain. *G. acutus* is 'glossy brown above, distinctly paler below' (Whitaker and Captain 2004).

In this communication, we report a rare instance of an albino Beaked Worm-snake from Maharashtra, India. The first author spotted the snake at around 11:30 hrs on September 18, 2011, at Sutarwadi hamlet of Gimhavane village near Dapoli outside his house. The house is surrounded by rice fields, trees on bunds, and sparse habitation. The snake was brought to the College of Forestry, Dapoli. It was observed, photographed (Fig. 1) and released back from where it was collected.

It was completely white. The identity of the specimen as *G. acutus* was ascertained based on the enlarged shield-like rostral scale (Fig. 2). No scalation data was recorded. The total length of the specimen was 44 cm. Its scales were white, with those towards the head having a pinkish tinge. Eyespots could not be discerned.

This is, perhaps, the first report of albinism in *G. acutus*. This specimen was an adult with its length reaching three fourths of its recorded maximum length (Whitaker and Captain 2004). This is an instance of an albino snake surviving to adulthood, contrary to what is reported (see Krecsak 2008), and suggests that albino snakes can survive to adulthood even in the wild.

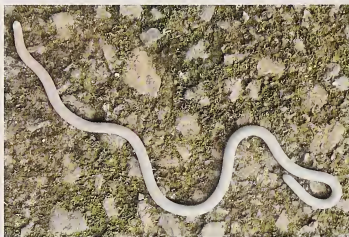


Fig. 1: Albino *Gryptotyphlops acutus* from Dapoli, Maharashtra



Fig. 2: View of head showing enlarged rostral scale of *Gryptotyphlops acutus*